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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SSM-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01 IO-13
TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /099 W
----------089945 240201Z /70
R 231525Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9461
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 13456

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT EG
SUBJECT: REFERENDUM: VIEW FROM LEFT

SUMMARY: PAO HAD LENGTHY MEETING WITH LEFTIST LEADERS MAY 20 (BEFORE REFERENDUM) IN WHICH LITTLE EESE DISCUSSED. MEETING HELD AT LEFTISTS' REQUEST AND IT CLEAR THEY TRYZNG GET MESSAGE TO USG. GIST IS: SADAT MAKING MISTAKE; IF HE CONTINUES ON PRESENT COURSE THINGS WILL GET WORSE; AND USG SHOULD URGE PRESIDENT NOT TAKE UNDEMOCRATIC ACTIONS. MESSAGE SOMEWHAT HYPOCRITICAL BUT UNDOUBTEDLY HEARTFELT: LEFTISTS ARE SCARED. END SUMMARY.

1. LEFTIST MESSAGE. PAO HAD THREE HOUR LUNCH WITH LEADING LEFTISTS INCLUDING LUTFI AL KHULI, MAKRAM MUHAMMAD, IBRAHIM SAQR AND AWATIF ABDEL RAHMAN ON MAY 20. MEETING WAS AT REQUEST LEFT PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER AL KHULI AND IT CLEAR PARTY WANTED GET MESSAGE TO USG.

2. REFERENDUM. MAIN POINT OF MESSAGE APPEARED TO BE REFERENDUM UNCONSTITUTIONAL, AS WELL AS UNPOPULAR, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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WOULD PRECIFITATE CRISIS FOR SADAT. IT PROVES PRESIDENT UNABLE TOLERATE CRITICISM. TIMING FOR BALLOT SAID TO BE DETERMINED BY DETERIORA1ING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND FACT STUDENTS TIED UP WITH EXAMINATIONS AND UNLIKELY DEMONSTRATE OPPOSITION. NEVERTHELESS, REFERENDUM SHOWS "SADAT FINISHED": PEACE INITIATIVE HAS FAILED' ECONOMIC POLICIES CAUSING DISCONTENT; REGIME CORRUPT. DEMOCRACY

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WAS ALL SADAT HAD AND HE IS NOW GOING BACK ON THAT.

3. OPPOSITION. LEFTISTS CLAIMED LAWYERS SYNDICATE AND ALEXANDRIA UNIVERSITY FACULTY HAVE DENOUNCED REFERENDUM. AIN SHAMS REPORTEDLY ON VERGE DOING SAME. ACCORDING LEFT, NO REPUTABLE JOURNALIST HAS ENDORSED PRESIDENT-- ONLY "PROSTITUTES". LEFTISTS PREDICTED PEOPLE WOULD DEMONSTRATE OPPOSITION BY BOYCOTTING POLLS.

4. TACTICS. LEFTISTS TOLD PAO THEY WILL NOT RECOGNIZE VALIDITY OF REFERENDUM NOR WILL THEY ABIDE BY ITS RE-SULTS. THEY ARE SEEKING FORGE BROAD FRONT WITH WAFD AND IKHWAN, WITH WHOM THEY ALREADY IN CONTACT. AL AHALI WILL CONTINUE HIT GOVERNMENT, PRINTING ARTICLES BY WAFDISTS AND OTHER NON-LEFTIST SADAT CRITICS. IN-DIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY REFERENDUM WILL (HHLLENGE THIS IN COURT.

5. USG. LEFTISTS ARGUED USG SHOULD BE CONCERNED BY "DEMISE OF DEMOCRACY". AMERICA CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH GOE AND SHOULD USE ITS INFLUENCE TO WARN SADAT. ASIDE FROM HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS, PRESIDENT SHOULD BE TOLD HE MAKING MISTAKE.

6. POWER. LEFT BELATEDLY RECOGNIZED ITS LACK OF POWER. SAQR, PROFESSOR AT CAIRO UNIVERSITY, ADMITTED PARTY
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HAS NO MORE THAN 20 MEMBERS ON CAMPUS WILLING SPEAK OUT. AL XHULI WILL FIGHT BECAUSE "IF I CAN'T WORK IN POLITICS, I'M DEAD." ALL FEARED SADAT MIGHT TAKE ACTION AGAINST DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS IN WEEKS AHEAD AND FEEL HELPLESS TO PREVENT THIS.

7. COMMENT: CRITICISMS OF SADAT FOR STRIKING OUT AT CRITICS AND APPEAL TO U.S. TO ATTEMPT TO MITIGATE IMPACT ARE SOMEWHAT EMPTY SOUNDING COMING FROM LEFTISTS WHOSE REAL OBJECTIONS TO SADAT ARE OF QUITE DIFFERENT ORDER. NEVERTHELESS, THEY KNOW THEY HAVE A POPULAR ISSUE AND PLAN TO EXPLOIT IT TO THE HILT. WHILE IN THE RIGHH CIRCUMSTANCES THEY MIGHT AROUSE WORKERS AND STUDENTS, LEFTIST PARTY IS, IN AL KHULI'S WORDS, MORE A "DEBATING SOCIETY" THAN AN OPPOSITION FORCE.
MATTHEWS

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